

DESERT VOICE



**We will never
Forget**

Desert Inspirations

**The brave
die never,
though they
sleep in
dust.
Their
courage
nerves
a thousand
living men.**

-Minotaur Savage



PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane A. Coiro

Pararescuemen from the 304th Rescue Squadron are hoisted up to an HH-60G Pavehawk at Tallil Air Base, Iraq.

If you are interested in having your photo considered for photo of the week, please e-mail the photo, as well as outline information to

karima.mares@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

Sexual Assault, It's NOT your fault

If you need to report an assault, or have information pertaining to an assault Call the toll free hotline Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (800) 497-6261

*After hours, leave a message

*Callers may remain anonymous

*Outside the U.S., please dial a toll call and ask the operator to connect you to the toll free number

The Desert Voice

CFLCC commanding general
Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan

CFLCC command sergeant major
Command Sgt. Maj. John D. Sparks

CFLCC Public Affairs Officer
Col. Michael Phillips

Commander 13th PAD/CI chief
Maj. John Clearwater
john.clearwater@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

NCOIC 13th PAD Managing Editor
Staff Sgt. Eric Brown
eric.brown@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

Editor
Spc. Scott Akanewich
scott.akanewich@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

Spc. Karima L. Mares, journalist
karima.mares@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

Spc. Marc Loi, journalist
marc.loi@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

Sgt. Blake Deimund, broadcaster
blake.deimund@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

Spc. Aubrey Pomares, broadcaster
aubrey.pomares@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

**The Desert Voice staff
welcomes your story
suggestions and photos, please
e-mail them to us, or call us at:
825-5331 or 825-4730**

377th Theatre Support Command

requests the pleasure of the company of
ALL Armed Forces and Civilians
at the Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremony on
Monday, the thirty-first of May
at seven-thirty in the evening
Zone II MWR Courtyard
Camp Arifjan, Kuwait
Dress: DCUs

COE and Above Only
R.S.V.P. by 28 May NET 1200

Cover photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Brown. 13th PAD

Many servicemembers, such as these Airmen raising the colors at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, will be celebrating Memorial Day Monday, while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi freedom.

Volume 25, Number 30

The Desert Voice is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of the Desert Voice are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or Department of the Army. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command Public Affairs Office. This newspaper is published by Global Trends Co. W.L.L., a private firm, which is not affiliated with CFLCC. All copy will be edited. The Desert Voice is produced weekly by the Public Affairs Office, Camp Arifjan, APO AE 09366.

Memorial Days

Fallen heroes honored daily by solemn Soldiers of mortuary affairs unit

Spc. Scott Akanewich, 13th Public Affairs Detachment

Memorial Day is a time for remembrance, when we set an entire day aside to honor those who have fallen in every American conflict from the Revolutionary War all the way up to the current War on Terror. This is a celebration that bridges the gap between generations of Americans from the young boy whose grandfather fought on the beaches of Normandy to the family of the young Soldier who fell during the taking of Baghdad.

For Soldiers of the 54th Quartermaster Company, however, every day is Memorial Day.

These Soldiers are tasked with facing the grim realities of war in the form of preparing their fallen brothers and sisters-in-arms for the long trip home to be reunited with the loved ones whose freedom they left home to defend.

Staff Sgt. Seth Brawley is one of those Soldiers. He, along with his comrades, receive fallen warriors every day at the mortuary affairs compound on Camp Wolverine.

According to Brawley, it takes a unique type of individual to function under these circumstances on a daily basis.

"It takes a very strong person to do this nature of work," said Brawley. "You need to be especially strong emotionally because of what you see."

The 54th Quartermaster Co. is the only active duty mortuary affairs unit in the Army. They are the evacuation hub for the entire Operation Iraqi Freedom theater.

The company is on-call twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. At any hour of the day or night, the call could come that a flight transporting deceased troops is on its way. Just the previous night, Brawley and his troops were up until 4 a.m. working.

Pfc. Mari-Ann Lopez, 54th Quartermaster Co., mortuary affairs specialist, realizes that the responsibilities she has have no set hours.

"I've been up for three days before," said Lopez, a Los Angeles native who recently voluntarily extended for an additional six months in theater after

serving a six-month tour in Iraq. "They get here when they get here."

Lopez also acknowledges the mental scars that are sometimes caused by what she and her fellow Soldiers are witness to.

"I'll never forget the things I've seen," she said. "Each day you see human remains. You've got to be right in your head. Not everybody can do it."

Brawley, a veteran of mortuary affairs, admits that although he has a myriad of experience in his field, it still affects him.

"I've been doing this for 12 years and it gets easier," he said. "But it's never easy."

uniform as me, it was hard," she said. "It hits home."

Brawley does find a lone reward in this most solemn of duties, he said.

"There's a degree of job satisfaction when you evacuate a Soldier and the next stop will be with their families," said Brawley.

Satisfaction aside, though, he'd just as soon he and his crew have no duties to perform.

"We want to be bored, days when we have no business," he said. "There have been a few."

On this Memorial Day, in a year when more U.S. troops have died in the line of duty than in any other since the Vietnam War, the solemn Soldiers of the 54th Quartermaster Co. will be at their post. They, along with Americans everywhere, will honor the memory of those who have died.

Maybe, just maybe, they'll have a day off. 🐸

However, that being said, Brawley said he doesn't let his emotions get in the way because he can't.

"It doesn't affect my morale because it's a job and I'm here to do it," he said.

Lopez recalls the first time she handled a casualty on this, her first deployment.

"The first time I saw a Soldier in the same



Be Quick or be Dead

On-call patrols react to potential trouble at a moment's notice

Spc. Scott Akanewich, 13th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait- 2nd Lt. Chris Rioux is an infantry officer, a platoon leader trained to lead troops on the field of battle.

While he was attending the Officer Basic Course he received orders that would take him to the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea. Close to potential danger, but not in the fight, as he desired.

So, when a volunteer was needed to lead Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 146th Field Artillery on security missions in Iraq, Rioux jumped at the chance.

"I wanted to fight the good fight," said Rioux. "You want to make a contribution."

However, Rioux now finds himself a little farther south, in Kuwait as part of a Quick Reaction Force tasked with patrolling the dusty, windswept perimeter of Camp Arifjan, on the lookout for potential security breaches.

The QRF's mission is simple and to the point, said Rioux.

"A unit of two vehicles and six men can move out and respond anytime, anywhere on Camp Arifjan within 15 minutes," he said.

One of the unit's primary responsibilities is to roam beyond the berm surrounding the installation, ever-vigilant against possible enemy activity.



Cpl. Keith Gerard, 2nd Bn., 146th FA, looks over the terrain on the rugged outskirts of Camp Arifjan while on QRF patrol.

Spc. James Etter, 2nd Bn, 146th FA, keeps a wary eye while manning an M249 squad automatic weapon (SAW) circling the perimeter of Camp Arifjan during a routine patrol of the QRF.

Photos by Spc. Scott Akanewich

"A lot of times it's surveillance," said Rioux. "One of the towers will spot a suspicious vehicle."

Once this takes place, one of the six-man teams will roll out to investigate, said Rioux.

"Typically, we're a show of force," he said. "We try to scare them off."

Cpl. Keith Gerard, 2nd Bn., 146th FA, drove the lead vehicle on this day.

"We do outer perimeter searches," said Gerard. "We are looking for people who shouldn't be in the area."

As a wall of sand blew ominously toward the patrol, Spc. James Etter, who manned the M249 squad automatic weapon on this particular circuit, adjusted his goggles in anticipation of the oncoming deluge.

The 37-year-old Seattle native brings a total of 16 years of service, eight active and eight reserve, to the team.

"My main job is to man the SAW," said Etter, who had 900 rounds of 5.56-mm ammunition at his disposal should the situation call for it. "I also provide an extra set of eyes. It's a different perspective from up high."

According to Rioux, his troops were well-trained by the time the boots hit the ground here in theater.

"They had five months of solid training at Fort Lewis," he said. "When they first got

mobilized, all they did was train before they got here. They know how to shoot and move. They've been trained for the mission."

Rioux's background as an infantry leader gives him the edge when it comes to training his new troopers, he said.


"As an infantry officer, it gives me a better idea of what kind of training they need," said Rioux of the regimen his men

"Typically, we're a show of force. We try to scare them off."

regularly go through to stay focused on the mission. This includes staying updated on the ever-changing face of Camp Arifjan's perimeter and its many intricacies, which is critical, he said.

"If you have a reactionary force that doesn't know where it's going, it does you no good," said Rioux.

On this particular patrol, all the crew came across was a formation of camels and the occasional reptile hurriedly scurrying out of the way at the sound of the rumble of engines.

Rest assured, the perimeter was secure. 



Spc. Lorene Coley, with the 1004th logs information on all personnel entering the camp.

"Front Gate Bravo, this is the SOG, over."

"SOG, we have a van full of people, and one man's passport is not valid. It does not have a valid Kuwaiti seal, over."

"Front Gate Bravo, that is an easy one. He does not come on post. SOG, out."

The 1004th Quartermaster Company Soldiers must make on-the-spot decisions, like this one, daily as they provide security at Camp Victory and the 35th Brigade. Since arriving in country, the company has been tasked with two force protection missions that include guarding the main entrance and deploying a quick reaction force (QRF) when needed.

When these Soldiers were mobilized last November, most of them never thought they would be providing force protection in Kuwait, as they were quartermasters trained from Advanced Initial Training (AIT) to perform logistical jobs. The majority of the Soldiers from the 1004th on force protection have been trained to work with supplies and logistics mainly in a warehouse environment with a majority of them having had little force protection instruction beyond basic training.

"Although these Soldiers are quartermaster trained, they are always riflemen first," said unit commander, Capt. James Miller, a native from Baltimore.

"Force protection is the responsibility of every Soldier in the military, regardless of their MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) whether you are providing force protection on a company level or as we are now providing force protection for a major deployment," Miller said.

Staff Sgt. Mark Butler, also a Baltimore native, who oversees the QRF teams, said learning all the demands of the job also have proven to be difficult. "I didn't know there

"Quartermasters" Stand Vigilant

Story by Sgt. Brenda Lawry

1004th Quartermaster Company

would be so much detail and different perspectives to a force protection mission," Butler said.

Miller is pleased with the efficiency his Soldiers have executed their force protection missions. He also said the Soldiers have come a long way since they started force protection, and he credits the achievements to their personal professionalism and hard work. "I'm extremely proud of the efforts from the force protection leaders and Soldiers," he said.

According to the Soldiers on force protection, they are the first line defense, a warning system and a monitor for who is coming and going from the camp.

"We are in a foreign country and people take it for granted and think we are safe, but at any given moment, someone can stage an attack on our camp, and force protection is the first line defense," said Spc. Lorene Coley, 24, Seat Pleasant, Md.

While the vehicles are entering and exiting the camp and all the stations are inspecting and searching, Soldiers also man guard towers. From his guard tower, Spc. Michael Brown, Baltimore, monitors the activity on the highway and the activity on the entrance and exit lanes. Brown said if he notices anything out of the ordinary, he reports it to the sergeant of the guard, the first line supervisor for force protection Soldiers.

Spc. Anthony Carter, Greentree, Pa., said quartermaster units like the 1004th have to provide force protection because there are not enough military police units to perform this function. Nonetheless, Carter is comfortable with the job, risks and all.

"I'm not scared, even though I've heard reports about QRF teams up north (Iraq) being attacked," he said.

Staff Sgt. Greg Wilkes, Erie, Pa., is one of the sergeants of the guard for the unit's force protection mission. The sergeant of the guard pulls the entry control point and the quick reaction teams together with guidance and instruction for both teams. The sergeant of the guard's main job is to take care of the Soldiers and make sure they have what they need to accomplish the mission. Most of the sergeants of the guard contend that the hardest part of their job is confronting and challenging the leadership to ensure that the Soldiers get what they need and that the leadership fully understands what they are asking the Soldiers to do.

Wilkes said his 14 years on active duty, which included

a stint with the 101st (Screaming Eagles) Airborne Division, has prepared him well in his role as a sergeant of the guard. However, Wilkes feels the reserve component doesn't go far enough in its force protection training for citizen-Soldiers like the 1004th. On the other hand, Staff Sgt. Paul Overbeck, 33, Greensburg, Pa., also a sergeant of the guard and a former active duty soldier with the 82nd Airborne Division, contends the best force protection training is the mission itself.

"You can never get enough training. The best training has been being here and actually doing it," he said.

Sergeant Of the Guard, Staff Sgt. Dawn Eisman, Reynoldsville, Pa., has noticed the growth of her Soldiers.


"I've seen improvement in the teamwork and with Soldiers being more sure of themselves and their jobs," she said.

Miller, who knows that at times the job can be tough, pointed to the significance of what the unit is doing because it's protecting some of the country's elite combat Soldiers -- cavalry units, 1st AD, 101st Airborne and the 82nd Airborne-- who have come through these camps on



Spc. Ruth Mejia inspects the underside of a truck before it enters Camp Victory.

their way to or from Iraq.


"We are very important to all the transients units because we are responsible for the safety of these units headed north (Iraq) and the ones going home," Miller said. "All 1004th Soldiers will leave knowing they've done something important for the military, this region of the world, and they are a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. They are all taking an active part. When you go home, you can tell your kids, I protected those groups. The 1004th protected them." 

Combined Joint Task Force-7 replaced

Combined Joint Task Force-7 deactivated May 15 in a ceremony at Camp Victory, Iraq, followed by the activation of two new commands: Multi-National Force Iraq and Multi-National Corps Iraq. Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez will remain the commander of U.S. forces

in Iraq as the commander of MNFI, while Lt. Gen. Thomas F. Metz will take the lead role in improving combat tactics as the commander of MNCI, officials said.

The deactivation of CJTF-7

comes just 11 months after its creation June 14. Sanchez activated CJTF-7 then and took over as commander. In the past 11 months, CJTF-7 conducted offensive operations to neutralize and secure the area for the establishment of government for the Coalition Provisional Authority. CJTF-7 was also responsible for organizing, training and certifying the Iraqi Armed Forces. With more than 130,000 troops from more than 36 countries around the world, CJTF-7 has led an international effort in Iraq. 



Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, commander of the new MNFI and MNCI, speaks to the press about the new commands.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

June 2004

I Stand For Freedom





**We will not falter,
We will not fail**

Building For the Future

Soldier rebuilds Iraq while keeping family together

He never played a down in the NFL; he didn't give up more than \$3 million to join the military, and probably more comforting for his wife and children, he didn't gallantly give up his life for America.

Similar to former NFL safety and Army Ranger Spc. Pat Tillman, however, Staff Sgt. Tony Romano, a member of the 133rd Engineer Company, from Sanford, Maine, gave up his job and nearly a year of his life to fight for freedom.

Romano said the "sappy" reason he joined the Army right out of high school was that he grew up in a family and community that was military oriented. His grandfather served in World War II, his dad, in Vietnam.

So, is he sappy? Judging from the way he speaks of his wife and children, yes. Is he contrived? No, absolutely not. Not the Tony Romano who grew up eating, breathing and playing military. Not the Tony Romano who put off a marriage to his high school sweetheart until he got out of active duty military, instead of marrying her right out of high school and whisking her away to military bases in foreign lands.

"It was a mutual decision; we wanted to make sure we were making the right choice," said Romano. "It allowed us time to grow and made sure it wasn't some high school infatuation."

Indeed, it wasn't an infatuation. Romano knew from the very start, as a sophomore in high school, he wanted to be with Holly.

"Her sister wanted to go out with me, so she asked Holly to come tell me, but I decided I liked her better," he said.

He likes her, in fact, he loves her; but he also loves America.

For now, Holly and the two children

are holding down the fort. Holly, a recent college graduate and soon-to-be accountant, is described as a strong woman; a woman who, much like her husband, knows what she wants to do.

But no matter how strong, a woman needs someone to lean on. A woman needs her husband.

Romano calls frequently. At least once a week – and because life in Iraq was mundane, Romano listens to his wife instead.

He listens to her worries and her fears, he listens to the children's accomplishments, and his daughter's opinion on life – and at 13, he said,

every opinion is fact to her. So he listens as a father should – all 8,000 miles and several time zones away.

Devon, the 10-year-old, is already following daddy's footsteps. He wears OIF shirts, BDU caps and tells friends where daddy is.

But he, much like mom and sister, also worries.

And in Iraq, in the cold, wet winter, wearing his full battle gear and posting at security checkpoints, Romano also worried.

He worried whether his wife would be able to handle the household chores without him, he worried about his daughter going to dances and perhaps getting into fights, he worried about his son on his bike, "doing something stupid like jumping through a stream."

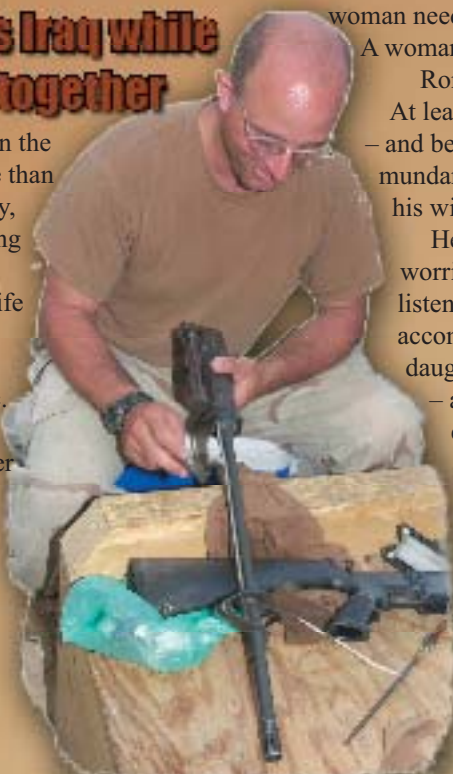
In Sanford, Maine, the winter was also bitterly cold. Streets were filled with snow, salt and dirty sand. Seven in the morning and

already Devon was outside, scooping buckets of snow off his mother's car – a job that belonged to his father.

It didn't snow in Iraq, but Romano had an equally important job. He was rebuilding



Staff Sgt. Tony Romano



Faces of Freedom

Staff Sgt. Kenya Watson
New Orleans

Sgt. Brandy McKinney
San Antonio

Lance Cpl. Terry Darling
Houston

Spc. Jessica Matthews
Westbrook, Maine

Lt. Col. Dan Morrison
San Francisco

schools. He was setting up airbases and building for the successes of Iraq's future – some of whom are the same ages as his two children. "I hope the influences we had on their lives were great – not even six months after the war began we started working on the schools, putting in lights and windows."

Such humanitarian aides, he said, is what 99 percent of American Soldiers do for the future of Iraq. While doing so, however, they also won the hearts of the Iraqi people.

They ate lunch with the Iraqis everyday. "They're the future of Iraq, they're the biggest resource next to oil," he said. "Especially with the children – they start with a clean slate."

But his job is done. The difference, no matter how small, has been made. It's time to be a father again. It's time to be a husband again.

"I want to see my wife and children," he said, smiling. "I can't wait for the same chores again – I can't wait for life to get back to normal. It's the tedious things that you miss the most." 🐜



“Until everyone comes home,”

Highlighting the USO Program at Camp Wolverine, Kuwait

Spe. Marc Lol, 13th Public Affairs Detachment



Except for the few dozens pairs of boots outside and patrons walking around the facility in just uniform and socks, visitors won't find anything else different about the USO tent at Camp Wolverine, Kuwait, than any of the other 120 USO service facilities around the world.

The facts point out, however, this USO is vastly different than any others. While others USO facilities only serve as a holding point for traveling servicemembers – this one serves as the last stop and the last

oasis for many servicemembers going to war.

Located on Camp Wolverine, at the U.S. military's Aerial Port of Debarkation, the facility first opened its doors Dec. 16, in the presence of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard Myers, and a host of other USO celebrities.

Since its inception, the facility has hosted more than 50,000 servicemembers, said Phil Harris, the director of USO Kuwait.

Anywhere else and travelers looking for a good night's rest in a room with big-screen televisions, gaming systems, cable TV and Internet access, would usually have to pay hundreds of dollars a night, but it's all free at the USO. All the equipment at the facility was paid for by an anonymous donor, Harris said.

“This facility provides a touch of home for all servicemembers,” he said. “It's an area with comfortable couches


Left: Among the items of comfort at the USO tent on Camp Wolverine, Kuwait, are X-Boxes, computers, and a plethora of other things that allow servicemembers to relax prior to a flight.

for those who wish to enjoy a quiet evening or a quick nap before the flight.”

Aside from providing comfort, this USO also offers other activities servicemembers can partake in to pass the time. Poker and spades tournaments are regulars at the facility – recently, a “Troop Idol,” a version of the hit-television show “American Idol,” was also held there.

Sgt. Michael Smith, a member of the 25th Infantry Division, recently arrived here from Hawaii, and took full advantage of the facility.

“I think a facility like this is outstanding,” he said – after more than 20 hours of flying. “It allows me to relax and go back to work.”

Much like Smith, approximately 400 servicemembers use the facility each day – and many come back more than once, even if it means having to take off their boots before entering the facility. 




Heat CAT	WBGT Index F	Easy Work		Moderate Work		Hard Work	
		Work/ Rest	Water Intake Qt/Hr	Work/ Rest	Water Intake Qt/Hr	Work/ Rest	Water Intake Qt/Hr
1	78-81.8 Degrees	No Limit	1/2 Qt	No Limit	3/4 Qt	40/20 mins.	3/4 Qt
2 (Green)	82-84.9 Degrees	No Limit	1/2 Qt	50/10 mins.	3/4 Qt	30/30 mins.	1
3 (Yellow)	85-87.9 Degrees	No Limit	3/4 Qt	40/20 mins.	3/4 Qt	30/30 mins.	1
4 (Red)	88-88.9 Degrees	No Limit	3/4 Qt	30/30 mins.	3/4 Qt	20/40 mins	1
5 (Black)	> 90 Degrees	50/10 mins.	1 Qt	20/40 mins.	1 Qt	10/50 mins	1

Beat the Heat!

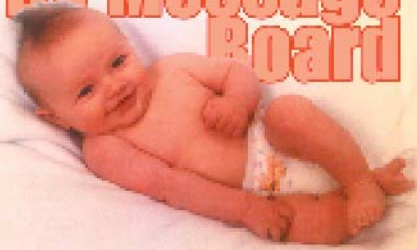
Avoiding becoming a heat casualty during the summer months can be achieved through a common sense approach and knowing the risk factors.

During the summer, the heat index is monitored hourly by preventive medicine.

Based upon the heat index, follow the appropriate work/rest cycle and water consumption guidelines. These are posted throughout the camps.

Heat strain and dehydration can accumulate over several days before causing heat illness. Therefore, during recovery periods, emphasize rest, shade, re-hydration and proper nutrition. 

My Message Board



Zachary – Congratulations on winning your first soccer game. Keep on practicing – when I come home, I want to see you score lots of goals.

Pfc. Williams – Thank you for all your hard work as the CFLCC armor. We know it's a touch job, but you are the one of the reasons this post is running smoothly. Keep up the good work.

878th ENBN – Congratulations – we did it and are finally going home. S-3 shop and construction cell, job well done! We did more than our share of the work! Spc. John Chandler.

Hey, you. Good luck with your surgery – moving 5,000 miles away from home is a tough decision, but it's one I hope you'll end up being happy with.

Hi to all my family and friends back in Kansas City, Missouri, I'll be home soon, I hope!

-Lt. COL Dan Speir

To my students at Jefferson High School, I miss your sarcastic sense of humor and I look forward to seeing your graduations! Best wishes to the seniors who just graduated, to the juniors, I look forward to seeing you next school year, and for my witty sophomores, I hope your hard work pays off!

-CAPT (Mr.) Chester Aguilar

Sgt. Tucker, good luck at BNOC, make us proud and come back soon – your tent awaits you!

-From Gabe 3k

Send your Message Board submissions (40 words or less) to karima.mares@kuwait.army.mil



The holidays are over, the celebrities are gone and entertainment is running dry once again here in the Kuwaiti Desert.

Thanks to Army Entertainment, out of Fort Belvoir, Va., servicemembers deployed in support of freedom are now getting entertainment through the USA Express Show, which is currently touring Iraq, Kuwait as well as the Operation Enduring Freedom Theater.

The show consists of Soldier entertainers – those who auditioned for and got chosen – who are quickly put together to form a band. They rehearse for 45 days after audition, and then travel around the world for about four months to entertain Soldiers.

Joe Lier, a permanent party Soldier with Army Entertainment, travels with the group. Though the Soldiers travel from base to base and country to country, Lier said he wouldn't have it any other way. In fact, he re-enlisted to be with Army Entertainment.

"I love doing it. During tours, we've gotten to go to Korea, Alaska and Cuba to entertain the Soldiers," he said.

"There are so many great days, I've had many favorite shows," he said after a recent show on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. "Tonight, for example, we had 250 people out – that's probably the most we've had."

Enjoyment is a two-way street. The audience also enjoys the entertainment. By

the end of the night during the group's Arifjan's stop, audience, consisting of both servicemembers and DA civilians, were dancing on stage. Many also crooned to the music, clapping their hands to American classics like, "Funky Town," "Proud to be an American," and Shania Twain's, "I Feel Like a Woman."

"The best part about the show is seeing the Soldiers loosening up and being able to relax," said Rechell Sears, one of the show's performers.

Though she has previous experience in performing with the Soldiers' Show, Sears said she enjoys the USA Express much more, because the groups are smaller, the settings are more intimate and performers are allowed to be themselves.

Sears, like other performers, will go back to her duties as an administrative clerk after the tour finishes, but the need for Soldier entertainers always remains, Lier said.

Soldiers interested in being a part of the USA Express are encouraged to visit www2.armymwr.com/entertainment/usaexpress.htm

Though it may be demanding, the job also has its reward – being able to entertain Soldiers live and in person, Lier said.

"MWR is extremely good at what they do with the X-Boxes and televisions and quality of life, but nothing is ever like live entertainment and musicians." 🐞



Operation Iraqi Freedom



Photo by Spc. Sean Kimmons
An Infantryman provides surveillance from a rooftop while his fellow Soldiers search for weapons caches during a mission in Kirkuk, Iraq. The Soldier is assigned to the 25th Infantry Division's Company C, 1st Battalion, division's Soldiers are deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Photo by Pfc. Elizabeth Erste
Spc. Jacob Lindbo, left, and Spc. Eric Gislvold keep watch for suspicious activity while fellow soldiers conduct a route clearance outside Ad Dujayl, Iraq. The Soldiers are assigned to the 141st Engineer Battalion, North Dakota Army National Guard, supporting the 1st Infantry Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Allmon II
A Black Hawk helicopter is transported by a CH-47 Chinook during a sling-load mission to Logistics Support Area Anaconda in Iraq. The helicopter was damaged after a hard landing. The Army aviation assets are playing a key role in Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism.



Photo by Pfc. Elizabeth Erste
Staff Sgt. Kevin Jensen checks the underside of two anti-tank mines found in a village outside Ad Dujayl, Iraq. Jensen is assigned to the 748th Explosive Ordnance Detachment, deployed from Fort Jackson, S.C., in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 748th EOD is supporting the 1st Infantry Division.



Photo by Sgt. Jeremiah Johnson
Soldiers dismount a Stryker Infantry Carrier Vehicle to conduct a patrol in Mosul, Iraq. The Soldiers are assigned to of the 2nd Infantry Division's Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, Stryker Brigade Combat Team. The Stryker Soldiers are deployed from Fort Lewis, Wash., to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.